The World of Downton Abbey by Jessica Fellowes

Elegant, Thorough, & Amazing!

A lavish look at the real world--both the secret history and the behind-the-scenes drama--of the spellbinding Emmy Award-winning Masterpiece TV series Downton Abbey April 1912. The sun is rising behind Downton Abbey, a great and splendid house in a great and splendid park. So secure does it appear that it seems as if the way it represents will last for another thousand years. It wont.

Millions of American viewers were enthralled by the world of Downton Abbey, the mesmerizing TV drama of the aristocratic Crawley family--and their servants--on the verge of dramatic change. On the eve of Season 2 of the TV presentation, this gorgeous book--illustrated with sketches and research from the production team, as well as on-set photographs from both seasons--takes us even deeper into that world, with fresh insights into the story and characters as well as the social history.

From the robins-egg blue of the actual book, to the luminous dust jacket, to the fonts, and really, the entire book design, everything looks very elegant and Edwardian. If youve followed my blog Edwardian Promenade for a while, or read books about the Edwardians, some of the historical content isnt exactly new per se, but Fellowes does a great job of placing the cold, plain facts of the era in the context of Downton Abbeys inhabitants. The book kicks off with a forward by Julian Fellowes, where he discusses his philosophy towards the series and continues to share his deep love affair with the long-gone society that inhabited the English country house.

Fellowes (Jessica, that is), takes us literally through the world of Downton Abbey, starting with family life, touching on society and its changes, life belowstairs, fashion of the age, the function of the country estate, romantic relationships, and war. Last but not least is the chapter devoted to behind the scenes of the series, though the entire book is interspersed with tidbits of the actual production. The amount of work that goes into creating this incredible high drama is astounding, and without pictures of the sets and
costumes and crew I would find it difficult to believe this wasnt pulled together with the wave of a wand.

Best yet are the mini-interviews from the cast and crew, whose interesting-and sometimes entertaining-recollections of filming series one and two (based on the synopses I've placed on the site, the book hints at happenings up to the second or third episode) are a treat. The one that stands out to me is historical adviser Alastair Bruce's conversation with Sophie McShera (Daisy), who complained that she never got to see the house since, as scullery maid, Daisy rarely left the kitchens! The only downside is that there are no quotes from Dame Maggie Smith! I would have loved to hear her thoughts on the series and its success, as well as her position as Grand Dame on the set, but alack alack-at least there are plenty of Violetisms sprinkled throughout the text.

But yet again I cannot express how lovely this book is! I spent the first day or two just looking at the book because its so beautiful, and the following week was spent absorbing all of the information in the book-and even then I've saved a few sections to read later on. Basically, The World of Downton Abbey is the entire series in print format, and for all of you Downtonites, this book is well worth purchasing!

(this review is reposted from Edwardian Promenade, where I've also interviewed Jessica Fellowes!)

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